BRITISH COLUMBIA

BC STATS Infoline

Issue: **98-18** **5** Pages
May 8, 1998

tel (250) 387-0327
fax (250) 387-0329

All issues since 97-01 are on our website:
http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate fell 0.6 percentage points in April.** It stood at 9.3% last month, down from 9.9% in March. The drop in the unemployment rate was due to a combination of factors. Six thousand British Columbians found jobs last month. At the same time, the number of people in the labour force declined by 8,400. Nationally, the unemployment rate inched down from 8.5% to 8.4%. The unemployment rate decreased in BC, Alberta (5.2%), Newfoundland (17.3%), and Ontario (7.2%), but rose in the other provinces. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **Unemployment rates dropped in most regions of the province.** Despite the month-to-month decline, they remained well above last year's levels. The exceptions were Thompson/Okanagan, where the unemployment rate was marginally lower (10.0%, three-month moving average) than in April 1997, and Northeast (2.9%), where the unemployment rate has hovered around the three percent mark since last November. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **BC's youth unemployment rate fell 0.3 percentage points in April, to 18.3%.** The national average was 15.7%, with youth unemployment rates ranging from 9.8% in Alberta to 26.1% in Newfoundland. BC's youth unemployment rate was the highest outside Atlantic Canada. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **There were 380,000 self-employed workers in British Columbia in April.** This was 0.7% more than in the same month last year. The growth in self-employed which has been evident during the last few years appears to be slowing. Self-employment had been rising at rates in excess of ten percent during most of the last two years, but has levelled off since late last year. The major reason for this is a decline in the number of self-employed workers with paid help. In April, there were 17.1% fewer workers in this category than in the same month last year. However, the number of people working without any paid help continues to increase, growing 11.5% in April. *Source: Statistics Canada*

The Economy

- **The value of building permits issued by BC municipalities declined 5.1% (seasonally adjusted) between February and March.** This marked the third straight month in which building permits have fallen. Planned residential construction was up 1.9%, but non-residential permits declined 15.3% in March. The largest drop was in the value of planned institutional and government construction (-22.1%), but commercial (-13.7%) and industrial (-9.0%) permits were also lower than in February.

  Nationally, the value of building permits was up 1.2%, due to an 8.7% increase in the residential construction sector. Permits issued for planned non-residential projects decreased 6.6% in March. *Source: Statistics Canada*

- **British Columbia's help-wanted index–a measure of the number of help-wanted ads in BC newspapers–rose for the first time this year in April.** The index increased three points, to 117 (1996=100), between March and April. Canada's help-wanted index moved ahead four points, to 142, largely on the strength of gains in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and BC. *Source: Statistics Canada*

Report Education levels of income assistance recipients

Did you know...?
The Census taken in 1871 cost Canadians a total of $511,000, or 14 cents per capita. Translated into 1996 dollars, that's $2.99 per capita. The cost of the 1996 Census was estimated at $374 million, or $12.50 per capita.

Bankruptcies

- **Consumer bankruptcies declined for the third straight month in February.** There were 603 personal bankruptcies in that month, compared to 650 in February 1997. Consumer bankruptcies had been on the rise in most parts of the country, but the tide seems to be turning, with the number of personal insolvencies declining in recent months. Nationally, bankruptcies were down to 6,425 from 7,263 in February 1997. Consumer bankruptcies fell in eight of Canada's twelve regions. *Source: Industry Canada*

- **The number of business bankruptcies in British Columbia was also down in February.** There were 77 business bankruptcies in BC, compared to 87 twelve months previously. Across Canada, the number of business bankruptcies also fell, decreasing from 1,187 in February 1997 to 1009 in the same month of this year. *Source: Industry Canada*

Medication Use by Elderly Canadians

- **In 1994/95, 74% of elderly Canadians between the ages of 65 and 74, and 79% of those aged 75 or more, used some form of medication, according to the results of the National Population Health Survey (NPHS).** Not surprisingly, elderly Canadians were much more likely than other Canadians to be users of medications. Less than half (46%) of all Canadian adults had used medication in the previous month. Young adults (aged 20–44) were the least likely (35%) to be on medication.
Source: SC, Catalogue 82-003-XPB

- **Ten percent of elderly Canadians under 74, and 13% of those aged 75 or more, were multiple-medication users who had taken five or more medications in the month prior to their interview for the NPHS.** Among all age groups, 3% of Canadian adults were multiple-medication users. The five drugs most commonly taken by elderly people were pain relievers (60%), blood pressure medications (30%), heart medications (22%), diuretics (11%), stomach remedies (11%) and laxatives (10%). Women were more likely than men to use most types of medications. The exceptions were drugs for heart ailments (24% of men and 20% of women) and diabetes pills (9%, compared to 6%). It is estimated that 10% to 30% of elderly hospital patients are admitted because of medication toxicity.
Source: SC, Catalogue 82-003-XPB

- **Twenty percent of seniors who were multiple medication users were also daily drinkers.** Alcohol has the potential to interact with at least half of the most commonly prescribed drugs, and can exacerbate problems caused by multiple medication use. *Source: SC, Catalogue 82-003-XPB*

Smoking

- **British Columbia has had one of the lowest current smoking rates in Canada since the late 1970s.** In 1994/95, 21% of British Columbians aged 15 or more were daily smokers who consumed an average of 18 cigarettes a day. Daily smoking was most prevalent in Quebec (30%) and PEI (29%), and residents of those provinces were also heavy smokers, consuming an average of 20 cigarettes per day. Nearly half (49%) of the adults in NWT were daily smokers, reflecting high smoking rates among aboriginals. In the north, two-thirds of aboriginals, and a third of other Canadians, were daily smokers. Four out of ten (41%) daily smokers surveyed said they had tried to quit smoking in the previous year. British Columbians (48%) had the highest rate of quit attempts in the country. It was lowest in Quebec (36%). *Source: SC, Catalogue 82-003-XPB*

- **The prevalence of smoking among Canadians has declined significantly during the last three decades.** In 1966, more than 55% of men and about 35% of women were either daily or occasional smokers. By 1994/95, the percentage of men who smoked had been halved (to 31%), while the number of female smokers fell to just under 30% of the adult population. One in four Canadian adults was a former daily smoker in 1994/95. Most (89%) of the former daily smokers quit smoking "cold turkey", and cited health concerns as their main reason for quitting.
Source: SC, Catalogue 82-003-XPE

highlights, Issue 98-18
May 8, 1998

For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

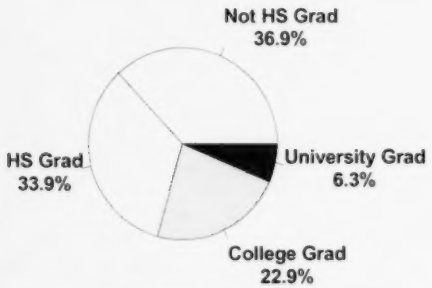
Infoline Report:
May 8, 1998

The Education Levels of Income Assistance Recipients

Originally published in January 1997 issue of *Earnings & Employment Trends*. Annual subscription is $60 + GST

The common perception is that persons requiring income assistance are the marginal members of society, those without much education or training who would have difficulty finding a job. Statistics Canada's Survey of Consumer Finance (SCF) confirms that this is certainly the case, but that many well educated persons also require financial help from the government.

In 1995, 3 of 10 Persons on Income Assistance in BC Had a College Cert./Dipl. or a University Degree



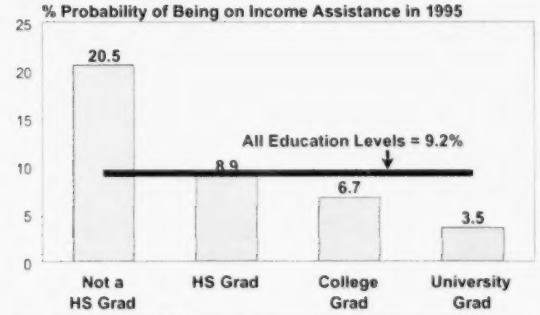
Source: Statistics Canada: 1995 SCF micro record file.

From this survey, families are asked to list all their sources of income over the year. In 1995, according to the survey, an estimated 193,000 persons age 15 to 64 (includes only those not living at home with their parents), claimed they required income assistance at sometime during the year. Of those, an estimated 44,000 had completed their college education, and a further 12,000 had a university degree.

The BC Ministry of Human Resources has precise data on the counts of persons on income assistance in any given year. However, it is very difficult to maintain up-to-date information on the education levels of their caseload. Because of that, it is necessary to rely on other sources to get an idea of the education profile of income assistance recipients.

Data collected through a survey may understate the number of persons who collect income assistance, as some people may be reluctant to identify themselves. However, the SCF encourages respondents to refer to their tax returns in order to complete the survey. In recent years, now that income assistance payments must be reported to Revenue Canada, the SCF estimates of the number of persons receiving income assistance corresponds more closely with the caseload of the Ministry of Human Resources. Notwithstanding that, the counts from the Ministry are the correct ones. The survey results documented here are only intended to give an idea of the approximate distribution of the caseload by education.

Persons Without a High School Diploma Have a High Risk of Requiring Income



Source: Statistics Canada, 1995 Survey of Consumer Finances, Micro Record File

In 1995, one in five persons who had not completed high school was on income assistance. As expected, this percentage drops off dramatically as education levels improve. Nevertheless, the fact that one in fifteen college graduates and one in 30 university graduates were in need of government assistance during 1995 is unexpected. This means these people had been unemployed for long enough that their Employment Insurance benefits had been exhausted (if they were enti-

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, BC V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca

tled in the first place) and their savings depleted. From other data sources on unemployment, the well-educated do show up as experiencing periods of unemployment, but it is assumed their unemployment is generally short-lived. Apparently, this is not always the case.

TITLES OF PREVIOUS ISSUES	ISSUE NUMBER
BC's Unemployed and Unemployment Insurance	97-11
Important Sectors for Youth Employment	97-10
Duration of Unemployment	97-09
Men and Women in the BC Job Market—20 Yr Persp.	97-08
Workers' Pensions	97-07
Youth: How Have They Fared in the '90s?	97-06
The Value of Education—It pays to stay in school	97-05
Service Producing Industries in BC	97-04
Males—Are they becoming "Stay-at-home Dads?"	97-03
Average Weekly Earnings in BC	97-02
Work Sharing—Solution for BC's unemployment?	97-01
Earnings of Men and Women	96-12
Women's Labour Market Participation	96-11
Low Income Rates in BC	96-10
Occupational Structure in BC	96-09
Career Activity—Comparisons of Young Men & Women	96-08
Idle Youth—Is it a growing problem in BC?	96-07
Students and Summer Employment	96-06
Comparisons of Employment in BC	96-05
Changes to the Survey of Employment Payroll & Hours	96-04
Self Employed	96-03
Provincial Comparisons of Average Weekly Earnings	96-02
Average Weekly Earnings in BC	96-01
Population Projections—Employment Equity Groups	95-12

❖

Add some *depth* to your understanding of the BC economy?

BC STATS publishes a diverse range of periodicals designed to provide both information and insight into the British Columbia economy. Individual copies and paper subscriptions are available as well as a "blanket" subscription to electronic versions on our Internet site. Electronic access provides tremendous savings and quicker access. If you wish to view sample reports, from our home page choose "Services and Products". Then choose "About our printed reports". Our site is at:

http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

To learn more or to order an item, contact

Kris Ovens at tel (250) 387-0359 / fax (250) 387-0380 / e-mail Kris.Ovens@gems7.gov.bc.ca

Infoline

May 8, 1998

fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Jan 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	3,950.7	1.7
Canada	30,425.3	1.0
GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT		% change on
(BC - at market prices - $ millions)	1996	one year ago
Current Dollars	103,631	1.7
Constant (1986) Dollars	74,001	1.0
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) Feb	2,828	-3.9
Merchandise Exports (raw) Feb	1,905	-14.3
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) Feb	2,636	-2.6
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Mar '98	one year ago
BC	109.8	0.1
Canada	108.4	0.9
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Apr '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,035	1.4
Employed - BC	1,847	1.2
Unemployed - BC	188	3.1
		Apr '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.3	9.1
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.4	9.5
INTEREST RATES (percent)	May 6/98	May 7/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.55	5.40
- 5 year	6.95	7.50
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	May 6/98	May 7/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.4387	1.3970
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6951	0.7158
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	Feb '98	one year ago
BC	614.83	1.2
Canada	608.36	2.3

SOURCES:
Gross Domestic Product: Statistics Canada, revised by BC STATS
Population, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings: Statistics Canada
Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

Maps on our Internet site

BC STATS is proud of the amount of small area data that we are able to provide to clients. Much of the data is freely available through our Internet site. In addition we have provided there a number of maps, by various administrative boundaries. By cross-referencing the data and the map you may increase your understanding of the information. We have provided a number of links to specific maps and two main routes from the home page to the section that contains the maps:

1)

Subject Areas ⇨ **Data Services**

Then choose ● Geography & Maps

Then Administrative Boundary Maps

● Please click here

2)

Subject Areas ⇨ **Population**

Then choose

Geo-referencing

Then choose Administrative Boundary Maps

Released this week by BC STATS

- No subscription releases

Next week

- Labour Force Statistics, April 1998

BC STATS, Min. of Finance & Corporate Relations, Box 9410 Stn Prov Govt, Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V1
Tel: (250) 387-0327 Fax: (250) 387-0329 Web: http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca E-mail: BC.Stats@gems8.gov.bc.ca